

Statement of Dr. Richard Raymond
Nominee for Under Secretary for Food Safety
U.S. Department of Agriculture
June 22, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin, and other distinguished members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you this morning as President Bush's nominee for Under Secretary for Food Safety at the United States Department of Agriculture. I want to thank the President and Secretary Johanns for their support and trust in nominating me for this position. I also want to thank Senator Hagel for his kind introduction. For the record, I am Richard Raymond, from the State of Nebraska. I am very humbled, and at the same time honored, to have been nominated to serve our nation in this capacity.

With me today is my wife, Jane, to whom I have been married for 35 years. Our two adult children, who live in Kansas City, Kansas, and Fort Collins, Colorado, are not able to be here with us today because of work obligations. Our grand parents were Nebraska farmers, and our parents grew up on farms in Nebraska. Interestingly, my father's first job off the farm in 1942 was with the USDA in the then-Farm Security Administration branch.

I grew up in the small rural town of Loup City, Nebraska, working on farms during the summers and weekends. Jane grew up in Wilber, Nebraska, also a community with a

population of around 1,400. I went to college in Hastings, Nebraska and attended medical school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center followed by a rotating internship in Spokane, Washington.

Because of the appreciation and value Jane and I have for living in a rural area, we returned to Nebraska to practice Family Medicine and to raise our family in the O'Neill, Nebraska area, a rural community with a population of 4,400. My interest in public service and public health is deeply rooted in the community of O'Neill, as well as in the small town of Loup City and the people I have served as a medical doctor for over 30 years.

As a family doctor in a rural community, I was the key public health official to my neighbors, my friends, and my family. Their trust was not only rewarding, but it sparked in me a greater interest in public service and public health. After 17 years of rural practice, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to establish and then direct a community based Family Practice Residency Program in Omaha, Nebraska. Through this program, young family physicians were trained in the needs and rewards of practicing in rural communities and prepared to succeed in rural practice.

My appointment in January 1999 as the Chief Medical Officer for the Nebraska Health and Human Services System by then Governor Mike Johanns presented me with the opportunity to further extend the reach of public health. In the past, food safety officials in the public health community have focused almost entirely on preventing and

responding to unintentional contamination of the food supply. Especially since September 11, 2001, we have come to realize that public health must include defenses against forces that would intentionally contaminate food, water, and other life necessities. Governor Johanns recognized this and asked me to lead Nebraska's bioterrorism preparedness and response planning. The Nebraska Health and Human Services System has a staff of almost 6000 people located in 100 locations throughout Nebraska, and has a budget of \$2.5 billion. The public health system, under my leadership, went from only 20 counties with a health department to having newly established multi-county public health departments serving the citizens in all 93 counties to meet this new reality.

If confirmed as Under Secretary for Food Safety, I will use my past experience as scientist, medical doctor, educator, public health advocate and spokesperson to assure that America's food supply continues to be the safest in the world. I applaud the recent progress and improvements made to our nation's food safety system. I recognize this success is because of the tremendous efforts of thousands of dedicated public health professionals within the Food Safety and Inspection Service at USDA. But I know we can and must do better.

I believe that by working with this team of public health professionals and by cooperating, communicating, and collaborating with other internal and external stakeholders we can make additional strides in improving food safety.

Mr. Chairman, I assure you that if confirmed by this Committee and the United States Senate, I will work with you and the members of the Committee to earn your respect and support as we work to make our food supply the safest possible

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer your questions.